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Government delays Chicago construction minority hiring

The Nixon administration has backed away—at least temporarily—from plans to impose a minority hiring system similar to the Philadelphia plan on Chicago's construction industry.

The decision to hold up imposition of the Chicago plan coincided with the President's latest public stand against busing to achieve racial balance in the nation's public schools. Details of the Labor Department's Chicago plan have been completed and public announcement of the plan was scheduled Aug. 14 in Chicago. At the last minute, however, Under Secretary of Labor Lawrence Silberman ordered a delay in the plan's implementation. There has been no explanation for the delay.

Transportation safety board critical of mass transit practices

While Congress has moved recently to relax some of the rules for delivering federal grants to cities for urban transit, a unit of the Transportation Department is urging some tightening of grant regulations regarding safety.

The National Transportation Safety Board has criticized the Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA) this week for laxity in adding safety rules to grant applications. In a lengthy study, the board noted safety deficiencies in the rules for proper guardrail and grade separations when rapid rail cars run alongside highways.

The report also found that tunnel emergency exits, ramps, and stairs in transit stations are frequently inadequate—with aesthetics dominating safety factors. The safety board strongly urged UMTA to take safety criteria into account in grant applications and use safety evaluation as partial basis for deciding where grant money should be spent.

The board also said the Federal Railroad Administration and the Federal Highway Administration should upgrade safety evaluation methods in joint corridor use of rapid rail projects near highways.

Air, water regulations to affect construction sites

Contractors may have to pay much more attention to dust control and water runoff at construction sites under the 1970 Clean Air Act, a water pollution bill proposed by Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Me.).

Despite attempts by the U.S. Commerce Department to eliminate a section from air quality guidelines describing control measures, a section dealing with dust control at construction sites remained when the guidelines emerged from a review at the White House Office of Management and Budget. The section calls on states to institute measures requiring dust control during construction and at demolition, application at construction sites of chemicals or water on roads or other surfaces that could give off dust, covering of open trucks transporting dusty materials and containment of dust during sandblasting.

The Muskie bill, approved by the Senate subcommittee on air and water pollution and awaiting full Public Works Committee action after the congressional recess, would require states to draw up plans to deal with water runoff from construction sites. The first time, it would deal with other sorts of runoff, such as that caused by agricultural operations.

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